Workplace Satisfaction Project
Employee Engagement Tools

The NPS is fortunate to have a workforce that is exceptionally engaged and dedicated. However, we can not take the inherent motivation and engagement of employees for granted – it can and does burn out and disappear, and it leaves us all poorer when that happens.

In an era of unprecedented commitments and complexity, it can be easy for an employee to lose sight of their connection to the reason they joined the NPS in the first place. Good managers will strive to keep that connection clear, remove barriers that inhibit engagement, and keep employees committed, motivated, and dedicated.

Employee disengagement or burnout in the NPS has historically often been viewed as an attitude problem or an internal motivation problem, and disengaged employees have often been drummed out unceremoniously as 'unfit', with the NPS relying on hordes of motivated applicants willing to take their place. Times have changed. Disengagement in the modern workplace generally comes from deeply committed employees pushing too hard and too long, and acquiring too much stress and disillusionment, in the pursuit of a professional idealism that is not realized. And there are no longer long lines of motivated people waiting to be chosen to fill the holes. All workgroups must treat employee engagement as a valuable nonrenewable resource to be nurtured and protected, both now and in the future.

The following tools enhance engagement:

- Genuinely inviting employee input and feedback, and adopting their good ideas

- Regular and sincere shows of appreciation

- Involving affected employees in decision-making processes

- Demonstrating trust by giving employees ample independence and agency

- Giving employees a challenge, goal, or initiative

- Giving employees platforms through which their concerns and ideas can be heard

- Giving regular encouragement and feedback

- Demonstrating trust by assigning work of increasing responsibility

- Making space for creativity and innovation

- Regularly addressing concerns and answering questions

- Managers honestly and candidly acknowledging difficult realities

- Promoting camaraderie and a sense of team

- Ensuring tools for success are readily obtainable in the workplace

- Promoting collaboration and group problem solving

- Recognizing and rewarding employees for additional duties

- Valuing positive workplace initiatives

- Flexibility in scheduling and accommodation for personal needs

- Successful conflict management

- Nurturing pride and motivation

- Communicating a sense of shared stewardship across workgroup boundaries

- Valuing diversity of thought as a primary work effectiveness tool

- Fostering the connection between employee and resource by giving them ample time to interact with it

- Promoting a sense of fun

- Demonstrating time investment

- Addressing 'Mission Drift' (the sense of lost purpose that occurs when dedicated employees lose sight of their connection to the NPS Mission)

- Playing to employee strengths when assigning work

- Reducing bureaucratic load wherever possible

- Fostering a culture of open-mindedness and calculated risk-taking

- Promoting innovation, reinforcing that "it's ok to fail" as long as it's a growth experience

- Understanding the challenges of others and demonstrating empathy for them

- Cross training between workgroups for novelty and diversity of thought

- Demonstrating consistency of action and values

- Having a genuine open door policy

- Arranging work retreats or mini-retreats for novelty and diversity of perspective

- Regular check-ins with employees

- Valuing the concept of two-way feedback